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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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January 28, 1970

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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Highlights of Symington Subcommittee Session on
Okinawa and Japan (2), January 27, 1970

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In addition to Senator Symington, Senator Fulbright was present for much of the morning and Senators Aiken, Cooper, and Case for part of the time.

Following up the first day's hearings on Japan's role in Asia, Counsel asked a number of questions in regard to

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the possibility of Japan's furnishing military training or financial support to other Asian countries, joint military planning with Korea, etc. Asked about the Chinese Communist reaction to the Nixon-Sato Communique, Ambassador Johnson said it was minimal and pro forma.

Senator Symington asked whether Communist China did not regard Japan as a political threat in view of past experience. Ambassador Johnson said in the short term the Chinese were probably concerned at the effects on their own ambitions of Japanese economic and political penetration into Southeast Asia, watching closely the Japanese role in ASPAC, the ADB, etc., and in the long run probably feared a rearmed Japan.

After General McGehee had described the most important US bases in Japan, Senator Symington questioned the need to keep planes at Misawa Air Base in view of its proximity to the Soviet Union. General McGehee explained how the base came into being and the difficulty of relocating in the Kanto area.

A good number of questions were asked in the course of the morning about the concentrated US presence in the Tokyo metropolitan area and whether this did not arouse resentment and appear to be a carryover from the occupation.

Ambassador Johnson explained that it was difficult to generalize: some installations such as the Army headquarters at Zama caused no problems, while the air base at Yokota was a more difficult problem because of noise and urban congestion. We have taken the position that we would relocate bases if Japan would make the necessary provisions, but in some instances the Japanese have felt the problems were not sufficiently serious, while in others funds were lacking. We worked closely together with the Japanese Government to solve our problems.

Senator Symington said he could understand why Koreans and Germans wanted a US presence, but assumed that the Japanese people, having great pride, would want our nuclear guarantee but would not want foreign troops on their soil. Ambassador Johnson acknowledged that the Japanese have not thought in terms of a direct threat to Japan and for this reason did not value the American presence for its own sake as did Korea and Germany. He had attempted through the Security Subcommittee to move the Japanese away from this psychology and make them perceive their own security as related to that of the general area. This was a prerequisite for gaining popular acceptance of our base structure.

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Senators Symington and Fulbright questioned the need for bases in Japan to back up the defense of Korea, the former emphasizing deterrent power in the form of Polaris and other systems as well as bases in other countries.

Senator Fulbright said it was not really relevant whether the Japanese wanted us in Japan; the question was whether it was in our interest to stay there. He declared it was not in our interest, and that we have done more than the Communists to undermine the democratic and capitalistic system by remaining in foreign countries. If we left Japan, the Japanese would pick up the tab.

In the course of additional discussion of our Korean commitment, Senator Symington said we had never achieved anything in Korea except to keep the North Koreans from going into South Korea. He said he needed a better answer to the question why we were in Japan. At one point he suggested we could move from Japan to Okinawa, had we not given up Okinawa. Ambassador Johnson explained that we were not giving back our bases, just administrative rights, and that Okinawa was already densely populated. He added that he did not believe we could have maintained ourselves in either Japan or Okinawa if we had not agreed to reversion.

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Ambassador Johnson explained that the ability to support the Seventh Fleet's presence in the general area and to support air operations throughout East Asia were also important reasons to keep bases in Japan.

Going back to the question of Korea, Senator Fulbright suggested that North Korea with a smaller population was accomplishing more than South Korea, and that we were following the previous administration in being obsessed with ideology in determining our foreign policy.

Ambassador Johnson commented that in regard to the threat to Japan, there had been a marked change in the attitude of the Japanese people after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. In regard to our base structure, he said that the administration is engaged in a number of studies on bases around the world to determine their relationship to each other and our requirements. He did not know what these studies would recommend, but there was a strong disposition to do all we can to reduce. When the studies reached a more advanced stage, we would be prepared to consult with Congress. Senator Fulbright said we would have to adjust to changes in the policies of countries like Russia and China. Ambassador Johnson called attention to

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the Nixon doctrine, the thrust of which was to have Asian countries do more and for us to do less.

Further detailed questions on the part of Counsel concerned the reduction in US bases over the past several years, the need for golf courses, the bombing range at Mito near the site of Japan's atomic research center, the Sanno hotel in Tokyo, etc.

Senator Symington found it difficult to believe a people with the national pride of the Japanese, with a strong economy, and in sharp economic competition with the US would want us to remain on their soil for long. Senator Case asked whether the Japanese had indicated any thoughts about a terminal date for our presence. Ambassador Johnson said this was related to the length of time the US would remain in Korea and how long we would have to keep the Seventh Fleet in the general area. He again called attention to the thrust of the Nixon doctrine and the administration's review of overseas bases. In response to Senator Symington's comment that we did not need bases for the Seventh Fleet, Ambassador Johnson said this was true on the surface, but we were able to get by with fewer ships if we had bases in the area.

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AFTERNOON SESSION

The afternoon session; attended for a brief period by Senator Cooper, was largely concerned with detailed questions by Counsel about specific installations; Senator Symington absented himself for most of the latter part of the session because of the press of Senate business.

Counsel's inquiries concerned: demonstrations at Tachikawa; noise at Atsugi; land pressure at Sasebo; facilities at the Ikego ammunition depot; the possibility of relocating housing at Tama; the reason why Sasebo and Yokosuka had to be operated as US Naval Bases rather than used on a commercial basis; differences in Marine and Air Force policies in regard to forward basing; etc.

In response to Counsel's pressing theme of supposed Japanese resentment at ^{the} "occupation holdover" character of bases, Ambassador Johnson said that for the most part he did not think this was true but rather that the Japanese Government and most people regarded the bases as the "price" Japan should pay for the substantial benefits it received from the United States under the Security Treaty.

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In response to Counsel's suggestion that our bases and the nuclear umbrella acted as a restraint on Japan's obtaining its own nuclear weapons, Ambassador Johnson said that insofar as they are an earnest of our intent to abide by commitments, bases had an inhibiting effect.

The question of joint-basing was raised in conjunction with discussion of the Itazuke Air Base. General McGehee and Ambassador Johnson explained that there was no provision

for "reverse joint use," whereby US forces would use a Japanese installation. Ambassador Johnson said he had raised the matter most recently when the Foreign Minister visited Washington in November 1969, but that we were confronted with a legal question. Although the SOFA did not contemplate joint use, our lawyers thought it was possible. The Japanese, however, did not agree, even though they supported the idea in principle. We continued to press them to find a way in which they could accept joint-basing and not be subject to opposition charges of having gone beyond the legal framework of our security agreements.

Counsel suggested that the joint Embassy-CINCPAC review of bases two years ago had resulted only in the return of

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minor installations; he wondered whether a sufficient effort had been made to cut back. Ambassador Johnson explained that the task had been addressed most earnestly by CINCPAC, USFJ and himself, and that he had questioned closely each of our installations, considering the missions to be performed. Mr. George added that we had been surprised at the favorable reaction by the Japanese press, which accepted our proposals as indicating the US would not insist on keeping its bases forever.

At the close of the session, Senator Symington expressed appreciation for Ambassador Johnson's excellent presentation and said he recognized the importance of Japan, compared with some other countries. He hoped to maintain the friendship and understanding of the Japanese people. He added, parenthetically, that some people felt stronger than he did about the danger of overcommitment.

Ambassador Johnson took this opportunity to expound on his unfinished remarks of the morning in regard to the rationale for our presence in Japan. He noted as his personal opinion that the US military presence in Asia, particularly land presence, was not an end in itself, but

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a necessary evil that was a function of the strength of the countries in the area, both allies and adversaries. Senator Symington, who had to depart for parliamentary maneuvers, encouraged Ambassador Johnson to add whatever he would like to his remarks for the record.

Ambassador Johnson said he would be at the disposal of the Subcommittee, but it was agreed that his presence would not be required at the next day's hearings on Okinawa.

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